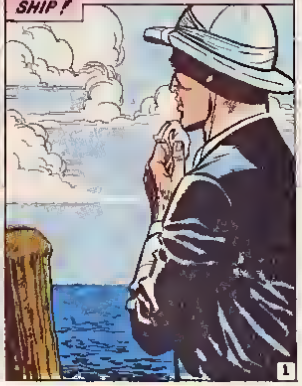
HORROR
AN ENTERTAINING COMIC
NO. 28
DEC.-JAN.
THE VAULT OF HORROR®
REPRINT EDITION
FEATURING...
THE VAULT-KEEPER
THE OLD WITCH
THE CRYPT-KEEPER

THE VAULT OF HORROR!

HEH, HEH! THE DOORS TO THE *VAULT OF HORROR* ARE OPEN, FIENDS! WON'T YOU COME IN? I AM YOUR HOST, *THE VAULT KEEPER*, AND I REALLY HAVE A *FOUL* STORY FOR YOU! IT ACTUALLY *SMELLS!* BUT YOU'LL *ENJOY* IT... SO IF YOU WISH, PUT A CLOTHESPIN ON YOUR NOSE, OR DON YOUR *GAS-MASK*, AND I'LL BEGIN! HEH, HEH! WHEN I'M *FINISHED*, YOU'LL KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I MEAN...FOR EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU IS GOING TO *LIVE* THE TALE CALLED...

TILL DEATH...

YOU STAND ON THE END OF THE PIER, STARING ANXIOUSLY OUT OVER THE GLITTERING, RESTLESS WATERS OF THE CARRIBEAN SEA. YOU WIPE THE PERSPIRATION FROM YOUR FACE...AND THEN, SUDDENLY, YOUR HEART SKIPS A BEAT! YOU SEE IT! JUST A DOT ON THE HORIZON...A *SHIP!*



YOU'VE WAITED TWO YEARS FOR THIS SHIP! FOR TWO LONG, BACK-BREAKING YEARS YOU'VE SWEATED TO BUILD UP YOUR SUGAR PLANTATION SO THAT IT WOULD BE FIT FOR A WOMAN TO LIVE ON! AND NOW THE SPECIAL DAY HAS ARRIVED...FOR THIS SHIP IS BRINGING YOU *YOUR FUTURE WIFE*...

THE SHIP SLIDES INTO ITS BERTH AND THE GANG-PLANK IS LOWERED! TOURISTS SWARM ONTO THE PIER TO BE SWALLOWED BY THE BUSTLING DOCKSIDE ACTIVITY! AND THEN...YOU SEE HER...

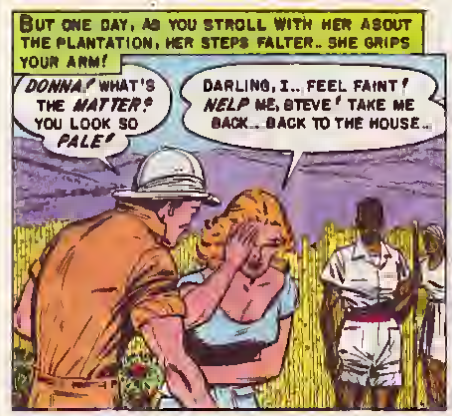
YOUR DAYS OF WAITING ARE ENDED! THE 'GIRL BACK HOME' HAS COME TO MARRY YOU... AND MANY HOURS LATER YOU ARRIVE AT YOUR PLANTATION DEEP IN THE JUNGLE...DEEP IN THE JUNGLE OF *HAITI*...

YOU'RE PROUD AS A KING! THE MINISTER PERFORMS A SIMPLE CEREMONY...AND THE FEAST BEGINS! THE NATIVES CHANT AND BEAT THE DRUMS...DANCING, LAUGHING, SINGING IN THEIR HAPPINESS...

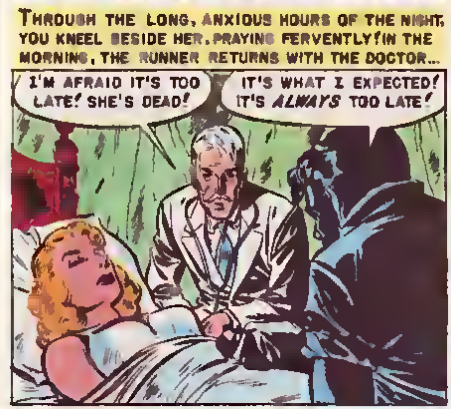
THE NEXT FEW MONTHS ARE PURE BLISS! DONNA WAKES YOU WITH A KISS EACH MORNING...

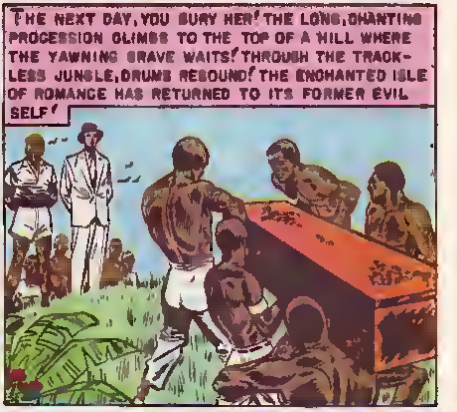
SHE PREPARES YOUR MEALS AND SERVES YOU FAITHFULLY, LOVINGLY! BY HER PRESENCE SHE TURNS THE BROODING VOODOO ISLAND OF HAITI INTO A BEAUTIFUL ISLE OF ROMANCE AND LOVE...

SHE'S BY YOUR SIDE CONSTANTLY, SHOWERING YOU WITH HER LOVE AND DEVOTION! NO MATTER WHERE YOU GO, SHE IS BY YOUR SIDE! *YOUR HAPPINESS IS COMPLETE*...


BUT ONE DAY, AS YOU STROLL WITH HER ABOUT THE PLANTATION, HER STEPS FALTER.. SHE GRIPS YOUR ARM!
DONNA! WHAT'S THE MATTER? YOU LOOK SO PALE!
DARLING, I.. FEEL FAINT! HELP ME, STEVE! TAKE ME BACK.. BACK TO THE HOUSE..

QUICKLY, YOU LIFT HER IN YOUR ARMS AND CARRY HER TO THE HOUSE! A RUNNER IS SENT TO FETCH A DOCTOR... BUT YOU KNOW IT WON'T DO ANY GOOD!
MISSY DONNA GOT HEAP BAD JUNGLE FEVER, B'WANA STEVE!
I... I KNOW, JEBCO! SHE'S GOING TO DIE! NO ONE EVER LIVES THROUGH IT!


THROUGH THE LONG, ANXIOUS HOURS OF THE NIGHT, YOU KNEEL BESIDE HER, PRAYING FERVENTLY! IN THE MORNING, THE RUNNER RETURNS WITH THE DOCTOR...
I'M AFRAID IT'S TOO LATE! SHE'S DEAD!
IT'S WHAT I EXPECTED! IT'S ALWAYS TOO LATE!


THE NEXT DAY, YOU BURY HER! THE LONG, CHANTING PROCESSION CLIMBS TO THE TOP OF A HILL WHERE THE YAWNING GRAVE WAITS! THROUGH THE TRACKLESS JUNGLE, DRUMS REBOUND! THE ENCHANTED ISLE OF ROMANCE HAS RETURNED TO ITS FORMER EVIL SELF!

YOUR LIFE IS EMPTY NOW! NIGHTS ARE FILLED WITH AGONIZING DREAMS OF MEMORIES! THERE'S NO ONE TO KISS YOU AWAKE IN THE MORNING..

JEBCO TRIES HARD TO TAKE HER PLACE! HE SERVES YOUR MEALS AS SHE USED TO... HE STAYS WITH YOU ALWAYS! IT HURTS HIM TO SEE YOU SO SAD...

BUT IT'S NOT THE SAME! NOTHING IS THE SAME! IT CAN NEVER BE THE WAY IT ONCE WAS! ONLY DONNA HAD CAST THE SPELL TO CHANGE THINGS...
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G'WANA.. YOU SICK IN HEART SINCE MISSY DONNA GO 'WAY! YOU LIKE MEBBE HAVE HEN BACK, YES?

JEBCO, I'D DO *ANYTHING* TO HAVE HEN WITH ME AGAIN! SHE WAS MY WHOLE LIFE!

YOU GET HEN BACK, YOU LIKE MEBBE KEEP HEN ALL TIME, YES?

I'D *NEVER* LET HEN OUT OF MY SIGHT, JEBCO! I'D KEEP HEN, AND LOVE HEN... *FOREVER!*

THAT NIGHT YOU DRINK HEAVILY... YOU WANT TO DEADEN YOUR SENSES TO THE REALITIES YOU DREAD! BUT IN YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS, YOU HEAR THE *VOODOO* DRUMS...

UNKNOWN TO YOU, YOUR FAITHFUL SERVANT JEBCO HAS REMOVED YOUR WIFE FROM HER GRAVE AND, CARRIED HER INTO THE JUNGLE! THERE, SURROUNDED BY THE FRENZIED, CHANTING WORSHIPPERS, A *VOODOO RITUAL* IS PERFORMED...

THE WHIRLING HYSTERICAL NATIVES LEAP AND DANCE THROUGH THE FLAMES, MESMERIZED BY THE EAR-SHATTERING THUNDER OF THE DRUMS! FAR INTO THE NIGHT THE HIGH PRIESTESS GYRATES SPASMODICALLY BEFORE THE CORPSE TIED TO A POLE IN THE CENTER OF THE FIRE RING! AND SUDDENLY... DONNA *MOVES!*

IMMEDIATELY, HER BONDS ARE SEVERED! HER FINGERS AND ARMS TWITCH! HER HEAD TURNS SLOWLY, AND HER EYES ARE OPEN—GLASSY AND TRANCE-LIKE! SHE IS A MEMBER OF THE LIVING DEAD! *A ZOMBIE!*

ZOMBIE

AND THE NEXT MORNING...YOU ARE WAKENED WITH A KISS!

ONCE AGAIN THE WORLD ABOUT YOU IS CHANGED! ONCE MORE YOU FEEL ALIVE AND HAPPY, CONTENT WITH EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE! *LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL!*

YOU STROLL ARM IN ARM, AND THE NATIVES GRIN IN THEIR APPROVAL OF YOUR JOY! YOU ARE SUPREMELY HAPPY...

YES...*SUPREMELY* HAPPY! FOR A *FEW DAYS!* BECAUSE SLOWLY YOU BECOME AWARE OF SOMETHING...

(SNIFF!) *PHEW!* DONNA, DON'T YOU THINK YOU OUGHT TO TAKE A *BATH?*

A BATH HELPS...A LITTLE! BUT AN HOUR LATER...

PHEW! DONNA, *PLEASE!* TAKE ANOTHER *BATH!*

THEN WITH A SHOCK, YOU REALIZE...

MY GOSH! BATHS WON'T STOP HER ODOR! SHE'S *DEAD!* SHE'S... *SHE'S STARTING TO DECAY!*

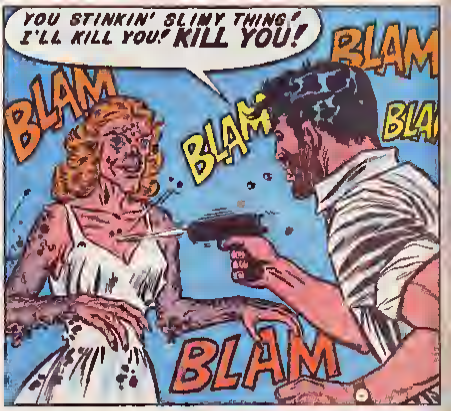
THE SWELTERING DAYS PASS, AND DONNA'S CONDITION CONSTANTLY GETS WORSE! HER SKIN BEGINS TO *ROT* AND DROP FROM HER BONES! YOU TRY TO ESCAPE FROM HER...BUT SHE REMAINS WITH YOU...

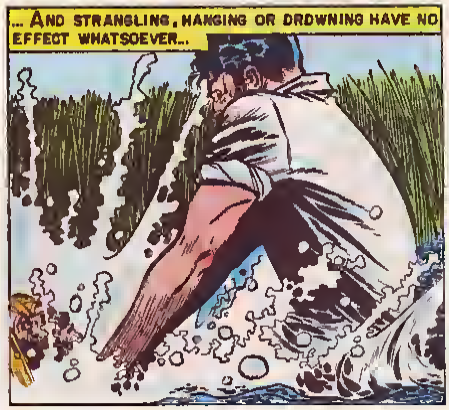
DONNA, *PLEASE!* LEAVE ME ALONE JUST FOR A LITTLE WHILE! *PLEASE!* (CHOKE!)

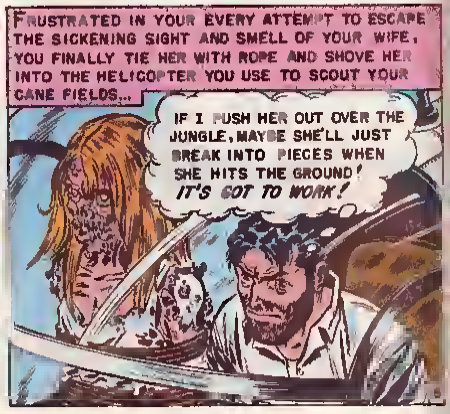
HER ENTIRE EXISTENCE IS YOU! SHE STAYS BY YOUR SIDE DAY AND NIGHT, CLINGING TIGHTLY TO YOUR ARM! AND IN THE MORNING...

NO! NO! DON'T *KISS* ME! I'M AWAKE! *I'M AWAKE!*

DAYS PASS INTO WEEKS! YOU'RE NAUSEOUS ALL THE TIME NOW, SO YOU STOP EATING! THE PUTRID ODOR SPREADS THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE AND PLANTATION... BUT THE *NATIVES* AREN'T BOTHERED! *YOU* ARE THE ONLY ONE AFFECTED... AND YOU *CAN'T STAND IT!*







YOU FLY OVER THE DENSEST PART OF THE JUNGLE! WITH A PRAYER ON YOUR LIPS, YOU OPEN THE DOOR... AND *SHOVE WITH YOUR FOOT!*

YOU WATCH THE BODY PLUNGE DOWN AND DISAPPEAR INTO THE FOLIAGE BELOW! THEN YOU TURN AND GO BACK TO THE PLANTATION! THAT NIGHT YOU WAIT PATIENTLY...

SHE MUSTN'T COME BACK! SHE *MUSTN'T!*

A DAY OR TWO GOES BY, AND YOU ARE BEGINNING TO FEEL MORE RELAXED! ALTHOUGH HER STENCH STILL IS IN THE HOUSE, YOUR RELIEF IS IMMENSE...

I'M *FREE* OF HER! I'LL... BE ABLE TO *EAT* AGAIN SOON!

BY THE NEXT EVENING YOU'RE FEELING QUITE WELL! YOU ATE A MEAL TODAY...AND IT *STAYED* DOWN! BUT JUST AS YOU'RE ABOUT TO RETIRE, JESCO ENTERS!

B'WANA! B'WANA STEVE! MISSY DONNA! SHE COME BACK!

YOU RACE MADLY OUT OF THE HOUSE! IT CAN'T BE TRUE! *SHE CAN'T COME BACK!* YOU STOP! THERE, STUMBLING GROTESQUELY ACROSS THE COMPOUND TOWARD YOU, IS THE ROTTED REMAINS OF WHAT ONCE WAS YOUR WIFE! YOU FEEL SICK...

YOU TURN SWIFTLY AND RACE PASS JESCO INTO THE HOUSE! IT'S THE END, NOW! YOU CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE! THERE'S ONLY *ONE* WAY LEFT!

THE MEDICINE CHEST! YOUR HANDS FUMBLE IN YOUR FRANTIC HASTE, BUT YOU FIND WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR! IF YOU CAN'T DESTROY *HER*...YOU'VE GOT TO DESTROY *YOURSELF!* YOU OPEN THE BOTTLE MARKED *'POISON'* AND DRINK!

THE POISON IS STRONG! IT ACTS QUICKLY! YOU FEEL THE BURNING IN YOUR THROAT...YOUR SURROUNDINGS ARE GOING BLACK...

FOR A LONG WHILE YOU FLOAT IN A SEA OF DARKNESS... AND THEN, BIT BY BIT, YOU HEAR THE FAR AWAY SOUND OF THUNDER...

THE NOISE GROWS LOUDER AND CLEARER! YOU RECOGNIZE IT AS THE RUMBLING OF DRUMS! YOU FEEL A GREAT HEAT...YOU TWITCH... AND OPEN YOUR EYES...

YOU SEE A GREAT WALL OF FIRE... AND HEAR THE MAD, FANATIC SCREAMING OF HUNDREDS OF NATIVES! THE DRUMS POUND THROUGH YOUR HEAD AS YOU MOVE YOUR HAND! A NATIVE LEAPS THROUGH THE FLAMES AND SLASHES THE ROPES THAT BIND YOU...

DUMBLY, YOU TAKE A STEP FORWARD...AND A GREAT ROAR FILLS YOUR EARS! YOU WALK THROUGH THE CIRCLE OF LEAPING FLAMES...AND FEEL NOTHING! THEN, JESCO AND THE HIGH PRIESTESS CONFRONT YOU...

IS GOOD! B'WANA STEVE, HIM SAY BE WITH MISSY DONNA *ALL TIME!*

A DIM REALIZATION DAWNS UPON YOU! YOU DIDN'T FEEL PAIN WHEN YOU WALKED THROUGH THE FIRE! YOU FELT *NOTHING* THEN...YOU FEEL NOTHING NOW! *YOU'RE A ZOMBIE! ONE OF THE LIVING DEAD!* AND, AS JESCO SAID, YOU'LL BE WITH DONNA FOR ALL TIME NOW... *FOREVER! LOOK OUT! HERE SHE COMES...*

THE END

HEH, HEH! AIN'T THAT *ZOMBTING?* STEVE HAD *ROTTEN* LUCK, DIDN'T HE? I GUESS DONNA *DONNA KNOW* ABOUT *LIFEBUOY!* BUT NOW THAT STEVE'S A ZOMBIE, AT LEAST SHE HAS A *DEADBOY!* HEH, HEH, HEH! OH, I'M REALLY *FIRED UP,* EH? WHAT'AYA MEAN, I'M JUST A *DRUM*BELL?! WELL, *O.K.'S* GETTIN' IMPATIENT, SO I'LL PASS YOU ALONG TO HIM! SEE YOU LATER!

THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH! ONCE I *SAW* A *SAW-MILL!* AND I ADDED *ANOTHER BLOOD-CURDLING TALE OF TERROR* TO MY *FABULOUS COLLECTION* HERE IN THE *CRYPT!* SO COME IN, FIENDS! COME SIT BESIDE YOUR *NORROR-HOST, THE CRYPT-KEEPER!* I'LL *TELL* IT TO YOU... IF YOU *WOODEN MIND!* I *CALL* THIS *SPINE-TINGLING* YARN...

THE CHIPS ARE DOWN!

SIGMUND DARBY LEANED OVER AND SNAPPED ON THE INTERCOM IN RESPONSE TO THE INSTRUMENT'S IMPATIENT BUZZING! BEHIND HIM STOOD HIS PARTNERS, AVERILL HENNING AND GILBERT FIELD...

NOW YOU'VE MET THE PLAYERS IN OUR LITTLE GAME OF CHANCE, FIENDS! PARTNERS IN A SAW-MILL! LOOK! SEE HOW THEIR STAKES IN LIFE STACK UP? EQUALLY! THIS ONE IS SIGMUND DARBY'S! THE ONE IN THE MIDDLE... AVERILL HENNINGS! AND THE ONE ON THE RIGHT... GILBERT FIELD'S...
COME IN, COLONEL! SIT DOWN! THESE ARE MY ASSOCIATES... MR. HENNING AND MR. FIELD!
A PLEASURE, GENTLEMEN!
HOW DO, COLONEL!
THE PLEASURE IS OURS, SIR!
GENTLEMEN! YOUR SAW-MILL HAS BEEN CHOSEN BY THE ARMY FOR A HIGHLY SECRET GOVERNMENT CONTRACT! WE KNOW YOUR RECORD! WE KNOW WHAT YOU CAN DO! I HAVE HERE THE SPECIFICATIONS OF WHAT THE ARMY NEEDS!
US
US
COLONEL TURNER SPREAD A BLUEPRINT OUT ON SIGMUND DARBY'S DESK! THE THREE PARTNERS STARED AT IT FOR A MOMENT! THEN...
WHY, THIS LOOKS LIKE NOTHING MORE THAN A THIN WOODEN DISC, COLONEL!
EXACTLY, MR. HENNING! THAT'S ALL IT IS! WAFER THIN!
AND THIS IS THE HIGHLY SECRET PRODUCT?
IT IS! LET ME EXPLAIN! I CANNOT TELL YOU WHAT WE WILL USE THEM FOR, BUT THE ARMY WILL NEED SIXTY THOUSAND OF THESE DISCS PER MONTH! THEY MUST BE EXACTLY AS SPECIFIED... TWENTY-SEVEN INCHES IN DIAMETER AND THREE SIXTEENTHS OF AN INCH THICK!
SIXTY THOUSAND A MONTH?
THAT IS CORRECT, MR. FIELD! THEY MUST BE MADE OF OAK, AND ENTIRELY FLAWLESS! WE WILL REJECT ALL THAT DO NOT MEET THE SPECIFICATIONS! THE CONTRACT READS THAT UPON DELIVERY, WE WILL PAY ONE DOLLAR AND SEVENTY FIVE CENTS EACH FOR THE DISCS!
COLONEL TUNNEN! WE WILL START SHIPPING IN TWO MONTHS..
AS SOON AS WE'VE DESIGNED AND BUILT THE MACHINERY!
PERFECT! GOOD DAY, GENTLEMEN!
GOOD DAY, COLONEL!
GOOD DAY, SIR!
GOOD DAY, SIR!
2

NEH, NEN! NOTICE, KIDDIES! LUCK IS WITH OUR PLAYERS! THEIR STAKES GROW...EQUALLY! SEE? BUT NOW, LET US RETURN TO THE D.H.F. SAW-MILL AND LISTEN AS THE PARTNERS DISCUSS THE NEW GOVERNMENT CONTRACT...
HOW CAN WE TURN THEM OUT, FIELD? YOU'RE THE ENGINEER! SIXTY THOUSAND A MONTH! THAT'S MORE THAN TWO THOUSAND PER PRODUCTION DAY!
I'LL THINK OF SOMETHING, GENTLEMEN! GIVE ME TIME!
COULD WE CUT DOWN OAK TIMBER INTO QUARTER INCH PLANKS AND CUT THE DISCS FROM THAT?
WE COULD! BUT IT WOULD BE COSTLY.. AND TAKE TOO LONG! NO! WE'VE GOT TO THINK OF A BETTER METHOD!
GENTLEMEN! WE HAVEN'T HAD LUNCH YET! SHALL WE..
HO, HENHING! LET'S HAVE OUR LUNCH SENT IN TODAY! WE'VE GOT A LOT OF FIGURING TO DO!
OH, LORD! I HATE SANDWICHES!
SANDWICHES! THAT'S IT!
WHAT ABOUT SANDWICHES, FIELD! WHAT'S 'IT'?
SANDWICHES! BREAD SLICES! THE WOODEN DISCS ARE LIKE BREAD SLICES! NOW DO THEY SLICE BREAD?
WHY, WITH A KNIFE!
NO! NO! I MEAN WHOLE LOAVES! NOW DO THEY SLICE WHOLE LOAVES?
WITH A SLICING MACHINE! A SERIES OF KNIVES VIBRATING AT HIGH SPEEDS! CUTS THE WHOLE LOAF INTO SLICES...
YES! AND A SERIES OF STRONG BUT PAPER-THIN SAW BLADES, SPACED THREE-SIXTEENTHS OF AN INCH APART, COULD CUT AN OAK COLUMN.. TURNED DOWN TO TWENTY-SEVEN INCHES IN DIAMETER... INTO DISCS EXACTLY THE SIZE WE NEED!
FIELD! YOU'VE GOT IT! YOU'VE GOT IT!

YES, DEAR READER! DILBERT FIELD *DID HAVE IT!* NOTICE *NOW*... NOW THAT THEIR BIGGEST PROBLEM IS *SOLVED*, HOW OUR THREE PLAYERS IN THE *GAME OF LIFE* HAVE *ADDED* TO THEIR *ORIGINAL STAKES!* THE STACKS ARE *HIGHER*... BUT *EQUAL!* LET'S LOOK IN ON THE D.H.F. SAWMILL ABOUT ONE MONTH LATER...

WELL, GENTLEMEN? WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE *MACHINE?* IT IS *COMPLETELY INSTALLED* AND *READY TO GO...*

LOOKS GOOD TO *ME*, FIELD! IF IT *WORKS...*

LET'S *TRY* IT, FIELD! *ALL RIGHT, ED! ROLL IH THE OAK COLUMN*

AN EIGHT-FOOT-LONG OAK COLUMN... THAT HAD BEEN CAREFULLY TURNED UNTIL IT MEASURED TWENTY-SEVEN INCHES IN DIAMETER ALONG ITS ENTIRE LENGTH ...SLID DOWN THE COVEYOR BELT AND ONTO THE CRADLE OF THE GIANT SLICING MACHINE...

READY, MR. DARBY!

START THE *MACHINE*, ED!

A SWITCH WAS THROWN! MORE THAN FIVE HUNDRED SAW BLADES WITH TINY RAZOR-SHARP TEETH BEGAN TO VIBRATE...

IT'S *WORKING*, FIELD!

IT'S CUTTING THROUGH THE *COLUMN* AS IF IT WERE *CLAY...*

GENTLEMEN! THE MACHINE IS A *SUCCESS!* OUR GOVERNMENT CONTRACT WILL BE *MET* WITH *EASE!*

IN *THIRTY MINUTES*, THE MACHINE HAD SLICED THROUGH THE OAK COLUMN, REDUCING IT TO A LITTLE OVER *FIVE HUNDRED WAFER-THIN WOODEN DISCS...*

PERFECT! PERFECT! SEE HOW *SMOOTH!*

THAT'S BECAUSE WE RUN THE MACHINE *SLOWLY!* WE COULD PROBABLY CUT THROUGH THE COLUMN IN *FIVE* MINUTES

...BUT THE *DISC SURFACES* WOULD BE *ROUGH!*

THIS ONE HAS A *KNOT HOLE!*

NATURALLY! THERE WILL BE *MANY* WE'LL *HAVE TO DISCARD! WOOD ALWAYS* HAS SOME *KNOTHOLES!*

BUT, AT OVER *FIVE HUNDRED* EVERY *THIRTY MINUTES* OR THEREABOUTS... AND ALLOWING FOR *THIRTY PER CENT REJECTS*, WHICH IS *HIGH...*

WE'LL TURN OUT *TWO THOUSAND A DAY, EASILY!*

HEH, HEH! OUR PLAYERS' FORTUNES CONTINUE TO PILE UP, EH, FIENDS? LOOK HOW THEY'VE GROWN! GROWN EQUALLY! BUT NOW... NOW GREED SITS DOWN AT THE GAME! LISTEN TO DARBY AND HENNING... AND GREED...
SIXTY THOUSAND DISCS AT ONE DOLLAR AND SEVENTY FIVE CENTS EACH IS $105,000 PER MONTH, HENNING...! $1,260,000 PER YEAR!
OUR PROFIT AFTER TAXES AND COSTS WILL PROBABLY BE CLOSE TO $200,000!
$200,000 SPLIT THREE WAYS DUTS THE PIE DOWN, HENNING!
ARE YOU BUGGESTING A TWO-WAY SPLIT, DARBY?
I AM! AND I HAVE A PLAN!
ALL RIGHT, DARBY! SPILL IT!
THAT NIGHT, AT THE D.H.F. SAW-MILL...
WELL, GENTLEMEN! WE TOPPED OUR QUOTA TODAY! SHALL WE CLOSE UP?
HOW ABOUT A GAME OF POKER, FIELD?
GOOD IDEA, DARBY! WE HAVEN'T PLAYED CARDS IN MONTHS!
POKER? WHY, I WOULDN'T MIND A FEW HANDS!
GOOD! GET THE CARDS FROM MY DESK, HENNING!
HERE YOU ARE! ER.. LET'S MAKE THE POT INTERESTING... SAY TEN AND TWENTY?
THE GAME BEGAN! SOON, DILBERT FIELD WAS LOSING STEADILY...
THAT'S ONE THOUSAND YOU OWE THE BANK, FIELD!
LET'S DOUBLE THE ANTE, DARBY! GIVE ME A CHANCE TO RECOUP MY LOSSES!

HEH, HEH! SEE, NOW, DEAR READERS, HOW OUR PLAYERS' STAKES ARE CHANGING? DARBY'S AND HENNING'S PILES GROW HIGHER, WHILE POOR FIELD'S BEGINS TO DIMINISH! AND THE GAME OF LIFE GOES ON..
WE'D BETTER QUIT, FIELD! YOU OWE US EACH TEN THOUSAND!
NO! NO! I'VE GOT TO WIN IT BACK! LET'S CONTINUE PLAYING!
AND THEN SEVERAL HOURS LATER..
GENTLEMEN! I AM BROKE! I OWE YOU ALL I AM WORTH! I HAVE ONLY MY SNARE IN THE MILL LEFT!
ONE HAND, FIELD? ALL THAT WE'VE WON OR YOUR SHARE?
I I DON'T KNOW!
IT'S YOUR ONLY CHANCE TO GET IT ALL BACK, FIELD!
ALL OR NOTHING!
ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT! ONE HAND! ALL... OR NOTHING!
DEAL THE CARDS, DARBY!
HERE GOES!
THE PAYOFF HAND WAS DEALT! CARDS WERE DISCARDED, AND THEN..
TWO PAIR, GENTLEMEN!
SORRY, FIELD! THREE TENS!
DILBERT FIELD ROSE FROM HIS SEAT AND WENT INTO HIS OWN OFFICE! HENNING AND DARBY GRINNED AT EACH OTHER
IT WORKED, DARBY! A TWO-WAY SPLIT!
I TOLD YOU I'D..
BLAMM
6

SEE, DEAR READERS! SEE HOW THE CHIPS ARE STACKED NOW! DILBERT FIELD'S PILE IS GONE... SPLIT BETWEEN SIGMUND DARBY'S AND AVERILL HENNING'S! SEE HOW HIGH THE TWO REMAINING PILES STAND? SEE HOW HIGH...
POOR DILBERT! I NEVER THOUGHT HE'D KILL HIMSELF! IF I'D KNOWN, I NEVER WOULD HAVE PERMITTED YOU TO USE THAT MARKED DECK, DARBY!
SHUT UP, YOU FOOL! SOMEONE WILL HEAR YOU!
YES, DARBY... HENNING! SOMEONE DID HEAR YOU! THERE... BELOW THE CRAWLING EARTH... DILBERT FIELD HEARD! BUT IT WAS A LONG TIME... SEVERAL MONTHS IN FACT... BEFORE DILBERT'S ROTTING HANDS PUSHED UPWARD FROM HIS GRAVE...
IT WAS THE NIGHT THAT BOTH DARBY AND HENNING WERE WORKING LATE AT THE SAW-MILL! NO ONE HEARD THE EAR-SPLITTING SHRIEKS THAT ECHOED INTO THE NIGHT AS THE STRANGE VIBRATING SOUND BEGAN...
YAAAAAAA
EEEEGGH
THE NEXT MORNING, ED, THE MILL FOREMAN, CAME EARLY TO OPEN UP! HE FOUND SIGMUND DARBY AND AVERILL HENNING STANDING STIFFLY BESIDE DILBERT FIELD'S MACHINE... STANDING IN A POOL OF BLOOD...
MR. DARBY! MR. HENNING!
BUT ED NEVER NOTICED THE MICROSCOPIC CUTS THAT RAN HORIZONTALLY ACROSS SIGMUND'S AND AVERILL'S BODIES! NOT UNTIL HE TOUCHED THEM DID THE DEAD PARTNERS SPILL OUT OVER THE BLOOD-STAINED FLOOR...
GOOD LORD!
FOR YOU SEE, FIENDS, WHEN A PILE OF CHIPS GETS TOO HIGH, IT SPILLS OVER... SWOOSH... LIKE THESE... AVERILL'S AND SIGMUND'S! YEP! POOR DILBERT'S ROTTED CORPSE PUT SIGGY AND AVERY THROUGH HIS NICE MACHINE! OF COURSE, COLONEL TURNER REJECTED THOSE DISCS! HEH, HEH? WHA...? WHAT DID THE ARMY WANT WITH WAFER-THIN TWENTY-SEVEN INCH WOODEN DISCS? OH, COME NOW! YOU'VE HEARD OF THE FLYING SAUCERS! THESE WERE BUILT TO SCALE! HEH, HEH! 'BYE, NOW! THIS IS YOUR CRYPT-KEEPER, SAYING... NEXT TIME YOU MEET YOUR LOCAL UNDERTAKER, ASK HIM IF HE'S GOT ANY EMPTY BOXES!

From Tabou on the French Ivory Coast to Takarodi on the Gold Coast, the drums sent the news of Trader Trask's coming! Trader Trask . . . the most unscrupulous hawker ever to prey upon the western coast of Africa! Trader Trask . . . the man who placed a beguiling tongue and some cheap whisky on the block to cheat the ignorant natives of their gold, ivory, timber, and raw rubber. Whether he gave them a few yards of cotton cloth for their copra or a low grade of tobacco in exchange for their cocoa and hides, he always came away with a great profit!

Trask's packet had been tied up at the wharf at Takarodi for but two days when the hold was already three-quarters filled with the fruits of his 'business transactions.' Upon his arrival, Trask had made his way through the bazaar where the native shops were set up. He cursed fiercely as his pith helmet was knocked off his head by the jostling African merchants and farmers who yammered over their wares like money-conscious monkeys.

The sun helmet rolled into a stall which was covered with a bamboo canopy. It wheeled around once and fell flat on top of some hand-carved ivory figurines that were arranged neatly on a bright red velvet cloth. Behind the display sat an Arab with a great hooked nose. The Arab leaned over and retrieved the trader's hat.

As Trask wrenched it from the obliging hand, he noticed the beautifully wrought silver pendant that swung from a chain about the Arab's neck. Trask asked to see it closely. Reluctantly, the latter unfastened the chain and handed it over. The hot sun ran around the little figures that embellished its outer circumference with the visions and divine revelations of Mohammed. In the center of the pendant, a blood-red ruby blinked coyly at Trask.

Trask turned the treasure over in his palm. On its flat-surfaced back were some strange characters . . . for in Arabic. He knew Arabic!

The longer he was mesmerized by the talisman, the more he would possess it! He offered the owner a most exaggerated sum for it, abandoning all the cunning that marked his former trading tactics. The Arab was obdurate . . . would not sell! He plucked the jewel-studded object from Trask and snapped it about his neck again!

Trask had gone away in dismal defeat. All night long he schemed in the cabin of his steamer.

The next morning, he walked briskly through the bazaar with a small pig under his arm. Reaching the ivory carver's stall, he yanked the sacred pendant from the startled merchant's neck. Quickly he ripped open the underside of the squealing piglet with a knife and thrust the pendant into the red-running gash!

The Arab recoiled in horror at the significance of the contemptuous act! To the followers of Mohammed, the swine are unclean . . . the very embodiment of the devil! Now that the talisman had touched sinful flesh, he could no longer own it! Trader Trask extracted the violated treasure, threw the bleeding piglet at the glaring, hate-brimming merchant, and strode off.

* * * * * *

The next morning, Trask's native servant found him in his bunk . . . his belly ripped open . . . the slain piglet stuffed into the gap!

Once more the pendant reposed on the Arab's chest . . . like a bright star against his sky-blue burnoose!

The writing on the back of the pendant was in *Sanskrit*:

The curse dwells in him who would this
Moon of Mohammed defile
To cast away sacrilege, anoint with a
larger pig's bile!

THE VAULT-KEEPER'S

GRIM FAIRY TALE!

AND IN THIS CASTLE, THERE WAS A BELFRY...

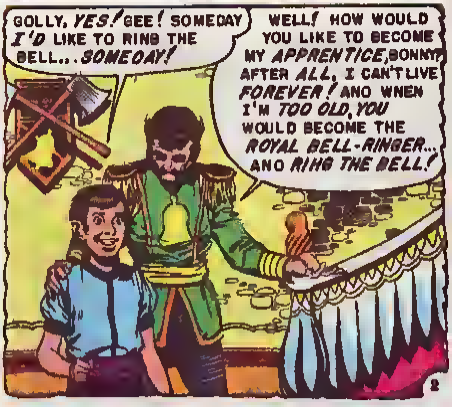
AND IN THIS BELFRY, THERE WAS A BELL...

THE BELL IN THIS BELFRY IN THIS CASTLE WAS THE PRIDE AND JOY OF THE KING AND QUEEN OF THIS KINGDOM...

EVERY TIME THAT THERE WAS A HOLIDAY OR AN IMPORTANT STATE FUNCTION IN THIS KINGDOM FAR, FAR AWAY, THE KING WOULD ORDER THE ROYAL BELL-RINGER TO RING THE BELL...
RING THE BELL!
YES, YOUR MAJESTY!

AND EVERY TIME THAT THE ROYAL BELL-RINGER OF THIS FAR AWAY KINGDOM RANG THE BELL, THE ROYAL BELL-RINGER'S APPRENTICE WOULD WATCH HIM JEALOUSLY...
ARE YOU WATCHING ROYAL APPRENTICE?
I AM WATCHING, ROYAL BELL-RINGER!

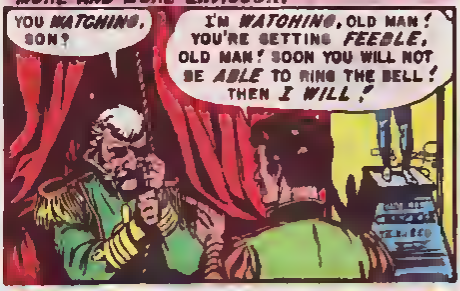
FOR THIRTY-FOUR YEARS... THIRTY-FOUR LONG YEARS.... THE ROYAL BELL-RINGER'S APPRENTICE HAD BEEN WATCHING THE ROYAL BELL-RINGER RING THE ROYAL BELL...
GEE!
HELLO, SONNY! DO YOU LIKE TO WATCH ME RING THE BELL?


GOLLY, YES! GEE! SOMEDAY I'D LIKE TO RING THE BELL... SOMEDAY!
WELL! HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BECOME MY APPRENTICE, SONNY? AFTER ALL, I CAN'T LIVE FOREVER! AND WHEN I'M TOO OLD, YOU WOULD BECOME THE ROYAL BELL-RINGER... AND RING THE BELL!

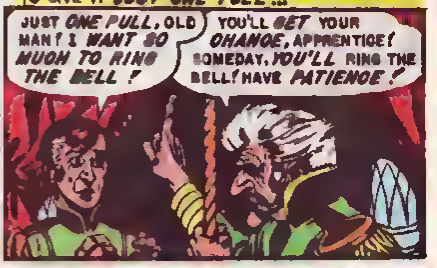
So the royal bell-ringer spoke to the king, and the little boy became the royal bell-ringer's apprentice...

The years passed! The royal bell-ringer grew old! The royal bell-ringer's apprentice grew up! At every state function or royal holiday, he'd watch as the royal bell-ringer rang the bell...

The royal bell-ringer grew older and older! The royal bell-ringer's apprentice grew older and older too! But the royal bell-ringer never [illegible] and the royal bell-ringer's apprentice grew more and more envious...

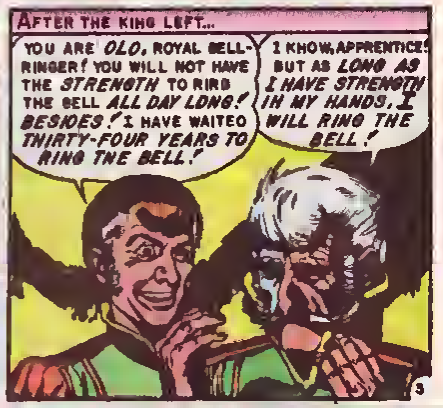


For thirty-four years, the royal bell-ringer's apprentice jealously watched the aging royal bell-ringer ring the royal bell! The apprentice's fingers itched to take hold of the royal bell rope... itched to give it just one pull...



But the royal bell-ringer's apprentice ran out of patience after thirty-four years! So... when the king announced...

After the king left...



THE ROYAL BELL-RINGER'S APPRENTICE BECAME TERRIBLY ANGRY! HIS EYES BULGED IN THEIR SOCKETS...
I WANT TO RING THE BELL! LET ME RING THE BELL. ALWAYS I WATCH YOU RING THE BELL!
YOU ARE THE APPRENTICE! YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO WATCH!
I WANT TO RING THE BELL!
AS LONG AS I HAVE MY HANDS... I WILL RING THE BELL!
AND IF YOU HAD NO HANDS, ROYAL BELL-RINGER, YOU COULD NOT RING THE BELL!
APPRENTICE! DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT!
AND IF YOU COULD NOT RING THE BELL, THEN I WOULD...
APPRENTICE! PUT DOWN THAT AXE!
I WANT TO RING THE BELL!
YAAAAAAAAA!
THE ROYAL BELL-RINGER'S APPRENTICE LOOKED DOWN AT THE ROYAL BELL-RINGER WHOSE HANDS HE'D SEVERED...
TOMORROW... ALL DAY LONG... I WILL RING THE BELL...
EEEEEEE
SUDDENLY THE DOOR FLEW OPEN! THE KING STOOD THERE! THE LAST SPARK OF LIFE SEEPED FROM THE OLD ROYAL BELL-RINGER AND RAN OUT ONTO THE CRIMSON FLOOR...
WHAT, WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?
IT MEAHS, YOUR MAJESTY, THAT I AM NO LOHGER THE ROYAL BELL-RINGER'S APPRENTICE! I AM THE ROYAL BELL-RINGER!

YOU...YOU KILLED HIM!
TOMORROW...ON THE QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY... I WILL RING THE BELL...ALL DAY LONG!
YOU KILLED HIM FOR THAT? BECAUSE YOU WANTED TO RING THE BELL?
I WAITED THIRTY-FOUR YEARS FOR MY CHANCE! THIRTY-FOUR LONG YEARS! BUT HE DID NOT DIE!
...SO YOU KILLED HIM!
AND NOW, I'LL HAVE MY CHANCE!
I AM SORRY, ROYAL BELL-RINGER'S APPRENTICE...
ROYAL BELL-RINGER, IF YOU DON'T MIND, YOUR MAJESTY!
I AM SORRY, ROYAL BELL-RINGER! YOU WILL NOT GET YOUR CHANCE! YOU HAVE COMMITTED MURDER! YOU MUST BE PUNISHED ... PUT TO DEATH...
NO! NO! I WANT TO RING THE BELL!
YOU MUST BE PUT TO DEATH FOR YOUR CRIME! GUARDS!
NO! NO! LET ME RING THE BELL TOMORROW! PLEASE! AFTER THAT, YOU CAN DO WHAT YOU LIKE! BUT PLEASE..TOMORROW
LET ME RING THE BELL! I HAVE WAITED... SOB ..FOR THIRTY-FOUR... SOB.. YEARS! LET ME RING IT!
ROYAL BELL-RINGER! YOU ARE GUILTY OF MURDER! YOU MUST BE PUT TO DEATH! TAKE HIM AWAY, GUARDS

EAALY THE NEXT MORNING... IN THE KINGDOM FAA AWAY... THE BELL BEGAN TO RING! IT RANG LOUD AND CLEAR...

IT WAS THE QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY! THE SHARP CLANGS OF THE BELL ECHOED FROM THE CASTLE...

ALL MORNING, THE BELL TOLLED! THE CLEAR RINGS... DRIFTING FROM THE BELFRY...

TOWARD NOON, THE TOLLING BELL SEEMED QUIETER... *SOFTER...*

TOWARD AFTERNOON, THE BELL'S TONES WERE *MUFFLED...*

AND TOWARD EVENING, ONLY A *FAINT LIQUID SPLASH* RESOUNDED AGAINST THE BELL! FOR THE NEW *ROYAL BELL-RINGER HAD INDEED RUNG THE BELL!* *HE*, OR WHAT WAS *LEFT* OF HIS BATTERED BODY, HUNG *INSIDE* THE BELL... *UPSIDE DOWN*... A *BLOODSOAKED GAG* TIED AROUND HIS *MASHED HEAD*...

HEH, H- END THAT'S *IT* FROM *PORT TILL*, KIDDIES! I HOPE IT STRUCK A *CHORD* WITH YOU... A *SPINAL* CHORD! SO THE APPRENTICE'S LIFE-LONG AMBITION WAS *FULFILLED* THAT DAY! WELL, THAT'S WHAT YOU *GET* WHEN YOU *USE YOUR HEAD!* WHY THE *GAG*, YOU ASK? WELL, THE KING FELT THAT AN *INSTRUMENTAL* WAS MOAE IN ORDEN THAT DAY, *WITHOUT* A *VOCAL REFRAIN!* AFTEA THAT, EVEAY-BODY LIVED *HAPPILY EVER AFTER!* AND NOW... *THE OLD WITCH AWAITS!* *SMELL* 'EA? 'ER *CAULDRON*, THAT IS!

THE END...

THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HMMPH! FIRST, *THE CRYPT-KEEPER* STEALS MY *'GRIM FAIRY TALE' IDEA! NOW*, THAT OLD *GEEZER*, *TRE VAULT-KEEPER!* A *HEW TWIST*..A *REW GIMMICK* A *GODO THING* AIN'T *SAFE* THESE DAYS! BEFORE YOU *KNOW* IT, SOMEBODY *SWIPES IT!* THOSE *OLO GROULURATICS* ARE AS *BAD* AS THOSE *RIVAL PUBLISHERS MY IDIOT EDITORS SCREAM ABOUT!* HMMPH! HEE, HEE! YEP! IT'S *ME*, KIDDIES! YOUR *HOSTESS* IN THE *HAUHT OF FEAR*..*TRE OLD WITCH!* GOT MY *FIRE LIT!* GOT MY *DAULDROR STEAMING!* GOT A *TASTY TALE OF TERROR* FOR YOU! *RURGRY? GDDD!* SIT *DOWR*, AND I'LL *FEED YOU* THE *PUTRID PORTIOH OF PROSE* I CALL...

WE AIN'T GOT NO BODY!

THE DOOR TO NORTON GOOWIN'S LAVISH APARTMENT EXPLODED OPEN! THE SWAYING FIGURE STOOD THERE, ITS EYES BURNING! ITS DECOMPOSING HANDS REACHED TOWARD NORTON, OPENING AND CLOSING ITS CLUTCHING BONEY FINGERS...

HENRY! NO! NO! YOU'RE DEAD! WE *KILLED* YOU! *NO!* YOU *CAN'T BE*..

NORTON LIFTED THE GUN HE'D BEEN GRIPPING! HE AIMED NERVOUSLY AT THE TOTTERING FIGURE! THE ROTTED MOUTH DROPPED OPEN AND A HOARSE VOICE EXPLODED FROM WITHIN...
GO AHEAD, NORTON! SHOOT ME! GO AHEAD! BULLETS WON'T STOP ME NOW! I'VE COME FOR REVENGE!
NO! STAY BACK! STAY BACK, SO HELP ME...
THE THING MOVED TOWARD HIM! NORTON BACKED AWAY FIRING AGAIN AND AGAIN AT THE STIFF BODY BEFORE HIM...
HEH, HEH! SEE, NORTON? SEE? BULLETS WON'T STOP ME! I TOLD YOU!
THE SIX SHOTS BOOMED THROUGH THE APARTMENT! THEN THE DULL CLICKS RESOUNDED, AS NORTON'S REVOLVER HAMMER STRUCK THE EMPTY SHELL-CASES AGAIN...
NOW YOUR GUN IS EMPTY, NORTON! YOU ARE HELPLESS!
PLEASE, HENRY! HAVE PITY! PLEASE...
THE THING BEFORE NORTON DREW BACK ITS DECAYING LIPS, REVEALING WHITE TEETH IN AN IDIOTIC GRIN! IT CHUCKLED...
SHOULD I HAVE PITY, NORTON? SHOULD I? DID YOU HAVE PITY... YOU AND CHARLES AND SIDNEY? DID YOU HAVE PITY THAT DAY... ON THE TRAIN?
PLEASE, HENRY! I... I DIDN'T WANT TO DO IT! IT WAS THEIR IDEA... ALL THEIRS!
NORTON STARED AT THE SIX BULLET HOLES THAT HAD BEEN TORN THROUGH THE THING'S BODY! THE HOARSE VOICE DRONED ON! THE ROOM BEGAN TO SPIN! THE WHISTLE OF A TRAIN RESOUNDED... FAR AWAY...
REMEMBER, NORTON? REMEMBER THE TRIP WE'D DECIDED TO TAKE? WE WERE GOING UPSTATE... FOR A REST! WE WERE GOING TO DO SOME FISHING!
'REMEMBER THE LIMITED... RUSHING OVER THE SHINING RAILS? AND HOW YOU AND CHARLIE AND SIDNEY DECIDED...'
ARE YOU SURE, NORTON? ARE YOU SURE HENRY NAMED YOU AS BENEFICIARY!
POSITIVE! TWENTY-THOUSAND DOLLARS WITH DOUBLE INDEMNITY!
THAT MEANS FORTY THOUSAND TO SPLIT THREE WAYS! OVER THIRTEEN GRAND EACH!
SHHHH! HE'S COMING DOWN THE CORRIDOR...
LET'S GO!
2

'REMEMBER, NORTON? REMEMBER HOW THE THREE OF YOU MET ME IN THE TRAIN CORRIDOR...'
HELLO, FELLOWS! WHAT'S UP?
C'MON, HENRY!
WE'RE GOING INTO THE CLUB CAR!
...PLAY SOME GIN RUMMY!
'REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED WHEN WE GOT BETWEEN THE CARS OF THE SPEEDING TRAIN...'
WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT? HEY! LET GO OF ME!
SURE, HENRY! SURE!
PUSH HIM! PUSH HIM!
'YOU PUSHED ME, NORTON! YOU AND CHARLIE AND SIDNEY PUSHED ME BETWEEN THE CARS! PUSHED ME TO THE SPEEDING RAILS HURTLING BELOW US...PUSHED ME UNDER THOSE KNIFE-LIKE WHEELS...'
AAAAAAAHHHHH!
'HOW CLEVER YOU WERE... PULLING THE EMERGENCY CORD... ACTING UPSET...'
WHAT HAPPENED? WHO STOPPED THIS TRAIN?
HE FELL! MY BROTHER FELL BETWEEN THE CARS!
'THEY FOUND ME, DIDN'T THEY? SIX CARS BACK FROM WHERE I FELL...'
HE'S UNDER THERE, ALL RIGHT!
IS HE... IS HE DEAD?
DEAD, ALL RIGHT! HIS HEAD...BOTH HANDS... AND BOTH FEET HAVE BEEN SEVERED FROM HIS BODY!
GOOD LORD!
CHOKE!
'THEY SEARCHED THE TRACKS, DIDN'T THEY, NORTON? THEY SEARCHED THE TRACKS FOR MY HANDS AND FEET AND HEAD! REMEMBER?...'
CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT! ONLY THE TORSO NO TRACE OF THE SEVERED LIMBS... AND HIS... HEAD!
PERHAPS THEY'RE CAUGHT IN THE UNDERCARRIAGE OF ONE OF THE CARS. C'MON! WE'VE GOT TO GET THE TRAIN MOVING AGAIN. THE FLYER'S DUE IN TEN MINUTES..
3

'BUT THEY DIDN'T FIND THEM, DID THEY, NORTON—MY LOVING BROTHER? THEY SEARCHED ALL THE UNDERCARRIAGES OF THE TRAIN! THEY EVEN SEARCHED THE TRACKS FOR MILES... AND THE IMMEDIATE AREA OF THE "ACCIDENT"...'
IT'S INCREDIBLE! A MAN FALLS BENEATH THE WHEELS OF A TRAIN AND ONLY HIS TORSO IS FOUND!
THOSE SEVERED LIMBS'LL TURN UP! YOU'LL SEE!
'A MONTH PASSED, BUT THEY DIDN'T TURN UP. DID THEY? AND BECAUSE OF THE IDENTIFICATION ON MY TORSO, THE INSURANCE COMPANY PAID OFF! REMEMBER?'
HERE IS YOUR CHECK, MR. GOODWIN! FORTY THOUSAND DOLLARS!
THANK YOU, SIR!
'YOU CELEBRATED THE NIGHT OF THE PAYOFF, DIDN'T YOU, NORTON? YOU... AND CHARLIE... AND SIDNEY...'
WELL, HERE'S TO YOUR BROTHER, NORTON!
TO HENRY!
AND THIRTEEN GRAND APIECE!
'AND IT DIDN'T OCCUR TO YOU THAT THERE WAS ANY TIE-UP BETWEEN MY DEATH AND THE DEPARTMENT STORE THEFT...'
CRASH!
'WHEN THE DRUNK THAT HAPPENED BY... WHILE THE STORE-WINDOW MANNIKIN WAS BEING STOLEN... TOLD HIS STORY, THE POLICE LAUGHED AT HIM...'
I SHAW IT, I TELL YUH! THE MANNIKIN WASH MOVIN' BY ITSHELF! NOBODY WASH CARRYIN' IT! I SHAW IT!
HEH, HEH! STEWED TO THE GILLS, EH, FLAGHERTY!
YEAH, MAC!
'AND WHEN THE PAPIER-MÂCHÉ HANDS AND FEET AND HEAD OF THE MANNIKIN WERE FOUND IN AN EMPTY LOT, THERE WAS STILL NO CONNECTION MADE...'
THEY'RE FROM THAT STOLEN MANNIKEN, ALL RIGHT! NOW WHY IN BLAZES DID THE GUY THAT SWIPED IT DO THAT?
PROBABLY A NUT, MR. TRACEY! WE'LL FIND THE REST OF THE DUMMY, REST ASSURED!
'BUT SIDNEY WAS SURPRISED THAT SUNDAY NIGHT, WASN'T HE, WHEN HE OPENED HIS DOOR IN ANSWER TO THE ANXIOUS KNOCK?...'
YES? WHO... IS... GASP. HENRY!
HELLO, SIDNEY!

'YES, NORTON' SIDNEY WAS VERY SURPRISED!..
NO! NO! IT CAN'T BE! WE BURIED YOUR BODY!
MY BODY, SIDNEY! MY BODY!
'AND SO WERE THE POLICE SURPRISED WHEN THEY FOUND SIDNEY'S BODY... OR WHAT WAS LEFT OF HIM...'
TORN TO PIECES! LIKE SOME WILD ANIMAL ATTACKED HIM!
ALL RIGHT! LET'S CLEAN UP THE PLACE, BOYS!
'A WITNESS WHO VOLUNTEERED INFORMATION TOLD A WEIRD STORY...'
I WAS GOIN' INTO THE ELEVATOR, WHEN THIS GUY COME OUT! HE WALKED FUNNY...JERKY-LIKE! AND HIS FACE... IT WAS WHITE...WHITE LIKE A GHOST!
COULD YOU IDENTIFY HIM, MR. YESON?
'CHARLIE CAME TO YOU, DIDN'T HE, NORTON? HE WAS FRIGHTENED! AND YOU LAUGHED AT HIM...'
IT'S HENRY, I TELL YOU! HE'S COME BACK TO AVENGE HIS DEATH!
YOU'RE NERVOUS, CHARLIE! YOU NEED A REST! WHY DON'T YOU GO AWAY FOR A FEW DAYS!
'BUT YOU DIDN'T LAUGH LONG, DID YOU, NORTON? THAT NIGHT AS CHARLIE WAS PACKING...'
WHO IS IT? WHO CAME IN? NORTON? THAT YOU? NORT...GASP... HENRY!
GOING SOMEWHERE, CHARLIE?
'CHARLIE STARED AT MY FACE, NORTON! HE DIDN'T WANT TO BELIEVE WHAT HE SAW! BUT HE HAD TO! IT WAS ME, ALL RIGHT! OH... A LITTLE PUTRID, PERHAPS! STARTING TO DECAY, YES! BUT ME...'
NO! NO, HENRY! IT CAN'T BE YOU! YOU'RE DEAD! DEAD!
YES, CHARLIE! YOU'RE RIGHT! I AM DEAD!
'HE SCREAMED SO, NORTON! YOU SHOULD HAVE HEARD HIM...'
AAAEEEEEGGHH!
5

'AND THE POLICE FOUND CHARLIE...JUST LIKE SIDNEY...'
ANOTHER ONE! TORN TO PIECES! THERE MUST BE A MANIAC LOOSE!
LOOK, CAPTAIN! PIECES OF COLORED PAPER! FLESH COLORED! WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF IT?
NORTON COWERED IN THE CORNER, THE THING LOOMING OVER HIM...
YES, NORTON! WE STOLE THAT PAPIER MÂCHÉ MANNIKIN! MY HANDS AND FEET AND HEAD! WE STOLE IT! WE NEEDED IT! WE HAD TO BE ABLE TO GET AROUND... WITHOUT ATTRACTING ANY ATTENTION... SO WE COULD DO WHAT WE HAD TO DO!
NO, HENRY! PLEASE!
SUDDENLY, NORTON STIFFENED! HIS EYES BULGED IN THEIR SOCKETS! THE COLOR DRAINED FROM HIS FACE...
NORTON STARED...HIS BLOOD-SHOT EYES FOLLOWING HENRY'S HANDS...
FOLLOWED THEM AS THEY DREW NEAR, FINALLY CLOSING ABOUT HIS PULSATING THROAT...
HENRY! NO! OH, LORD...
NO! NO!
EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE...
GGHHH!!
NORTON'S HYSTERICAL SHRIEK ATTRACTED THE NEIGHBORS WHO PHONED FOR THE POLICE! WHEN THEY ARRIVED, THEY FOUND...
TORN TO PIECES... LIKE THE OTHER TWO!
LOOK HERE, CAPTAIN! NEAR THE WINDOW!
A PAPIER MÂCHÉ MANNIKIN!
WITH NO HANDS OR FEET...AND NO HEAD!
6

MEANWHILE, FAR ACROSS TOWN, A SEVERED HAND, ROTTING AND DECAYED, SCRAMBLED UP THE WROUGHT IRON GATE AND TRIPPED THE LATCH.

HURRY! HURRY! WE HAVE WORK TO DO!

THE CEMETERY GATE SWUNG OPEN! THE HAND SCRAMBLED DOWN AND RETURNED TO THE HOARSE-VOICED HEAD...

QUICKLY! I WILL LOOK FOR THE GRAVE! CARRY ME! CARRY ME!

IT WAS A WEIRD TABLEAU... THE FIVE OF THEM! THE TWO FEET HOPPED ALONG! BEHIND THEM!... A HAND DRAGGED ITSELF! THE OTHER HAND LAY, PALM UPWARD, UPON THE BACK OF THE MOVING HAND! THE DIRECTING HEAD RESTED IN THE UPPER HAND'S PALM...

THERE IT IS! THERE! TO YOUR RIGHT!

THE HORRIBLE GROUP APPROACHED THE GRAVE! THE HEAD ROLLED FROM ITS PERCH AND LAY... WIDE-EYED AND PUTRID... AT THE BASE OF THE GRAVESTONE. THE HANDS BEGAN TO SCRATCH AT THE SOFT EARTH...

HURRY! DIG! DIG!

THE HOLE GREW LARGER! THE FEET TAPPED IMPATIENTLY! THE HEAD URGED THE HANDS ON! THE HOLLOW BOOM OF A FIST STRIKING A COFFIN ECHOED INTO THE NIGHT...

YOU'VE REACHED IT! SMASH A HOLE... SMASH A HOLE! DON'T FORGET... MAKE IT LARGE ENOUGH!

AND SO, HENRY SODWIN'S HANDS RETURNED TO THEIR PROPER PLACES AT HENRY'S WRISTS! HIS FEET SNUGGLED OLDSE ONCE MORE TO HIS ROTTING ANKLES! AND ON HIS ROTTED SHOULDERS, HIS HEAD FINALLY CLOSED ITS SUNKEN EYES... AND THE ROTTED LIPS CURLED IN A SLIGHT SMILE!

HEE, HEE! YEP! HENRY WAS TOGETHER AGAIN, KIDDIES! THE POLICE NEVER DID FIGURE OUT HOW AN ARMLESS, FOOTLESS AND HEADLESS MANNIKIN COULD TEAR ANYBODY APART, AND TO THIS DAY, THE MYSTERY REMAINS UNSOLVED! BUT CHARLIE KNOWS... AND SIDNEY KNOWS... AND NORTON KNOWS... AND NOW WE KNOW... DON'T WE? OH, BY THE WAY! I WAS TALKING TO HENRY'S HEAD... JUST THE OTHER DAY! IT'S THINKING ABOUT TAKING ANOTHER TRIP... IT AND ITS TRAVELING COMPANIONS! SO ON THE LOOKOUT FOR THEM, WON'T YOU! BYE NOW! WE'LL ALL SEE YOU NEXT IN MY MAG, THE HAUNT OF FEAR!

THE VAULT KEEPER